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By now, you have no doubt read or heard endless analysis about why this happened, so I will not belabor those points here. Instead, let's talk about what will happen next.

First, it is instructive to look at just what kind of majorities Democrats now have. On the day I am writing this, it looks as though Democrats will have about a 16-seat majority in the House of Representatives. This is nearly identical to the majority that Republicans held prior to the election. It is a substantial majority which will allow the Democratic leadership to do just about whatever they want in the House without any Republican support.

The Senate, however, is another matter. The Senate is actually split with 49 Democrats, 49 Republicans and two independents. One of the Independents is Bernie Sanders from Vermont. He is a self-proclaimed socialist who caucuses and votes with Democrats. The other is former Democrat Joe Lieberman who, by his own admission, received 50% more votes from Republicans in this election than he did from Democrats. He says he will act as a true independent. If he sides with Republicans on a party-line vote, the Senate is evenly divided.

But in spite of this, the Democratic majority will control the agenda and all committee chairmen in the Senate. One of the problems for whoever controls the Senate is the arcane “cloture” requirement which necessitates 60 votes to end debate and act on legislation. This requirement created problems for the Republican majority in the past few years, and it will be a headache for the Democratic majority in the next two years. This is the way the Senate has operated for decades.

Moving from the minority to the majority, as Democrats will do, involves switching to a completely different role. I have served in both the majority and minority during my political career. In the minority, there is the freedom to criticize the majority without actually proposing detailed workable alternatives. Congressional Democrats did this well in recent years.

But now they are unquestionably in charge and they must govern. That means offering and voting for solutions to problems, not just identifying what the problems are. That will create multiple challenges for them because of the harshness of their pre-election rhetoric. Here are a couple of them:

Richard Nixon had not held elective office for eight years prior to being elected president. In spite of that, when he was sworn in during January of 1969, he owned the Vietnam War that had been begun by his predecessors. Similarly, Democrats made the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan a central theme of their campaigns. They now share a larger responsibility for what happens in the war on Islamic fascism. They never proposed viable strategies during the elections. Now they will have to.

Democrats have been effusive in their criticism of the deficit despite the fact that it has been reduced significantly in recent years. But part of the Democratic Party's DNA is to increase spending. They will either have to forgo that temptation or propose tax increases or break their campaign promises to reduce the deficit.

During the campaigns they never outlined what they would do. Now they will have to.

The ruling Democrats will also have to deal with energy policy, the economy, and illegal immigration. Just continuing to bash corporations and successful people will not cut it.

Having the "corner office" brings with it privilege, but also responsibility. We'll see how

congressional Democrats handle that responsibility.